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Repercussions of climate change situation on health of elderly population

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As greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) blanket the earth, the sun's heat is trapped. This situation results in global warming (long-term heating of earth's surface) and climate change (CC). GHGs are gases in the earth's atmosphere that trap heat. CC (defined as: "a long-term change in the average weather patterns") has the potential to increase outdoor air pollutants, besides resulting in (a) wildfire smoke, and (b) dust from droughts. In addition, air pollution resulting from CC increases the risk of heart attacks for elderly people (aged 65 years and over), especially among those who have diabetic illness and are or overweight. Those with asthma suffer more. This paper aims to highlight the implications CC has on health of elderly population (or older adults). Secondary data ('qualitative' in nature) have been used by the author, and method of analysis is 'descriptive'. Analysis of data in this paper indicates that as people grow older, their bodies do not cope with the effects of environmental hazards, such as air pollution. Their health conditions make them more sensitive to consequences of CC (e. g., heat, and air pollution). CC worsen their existing illnesses. Further, since several of older adults have limited mobility (which is part of aging process), they are at increased risks 'before', 'during', and 'after' an extreme weather event. Furthermore, some medications change older persons' ability to respond to heat. As the climate warms, this situation puts them at increased risks for (a) heat illnesses, and (b) death. Respiratory illness is another consequence. More specifically, elderly people who live in buildings that are older or have poor ventilation are confronted with more risk for exposure to indoor air pollutants, like bacteria. This paper briefly concludes that older adults should (a) be aware of health impacts of CC, and (b) take required age-appropriate precautions.

Biography

Santosh Kumar is an Independent Researcher (Scholar) retired (on June 30, 2020), as Technical Assistant, from Population Education Resource Centre, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai, India. He underwent training in demography, with award of Government of India Fellowship, during 1986-1987 from the IIPS, Mumbai. Also, he acquired Ph. D. from University of Patna in 1999. His other qualifications include Post-Master's Diploma in Adult & Continuing Education, Certificate Course on Hospital and Health Care Management, and Diploma in Human Resource Development.